

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Bill Roberts

Filling Space

Once there was so much of it
I often felt alone,
abandoned, not connected,
then it began to fill up.

Nowhere near full
but filling fast, *space*,
with people, cars, housing
projects, malls – many derelict.

Do we need more people,
conveyances, malls, houses,
derelicts? No, I think not.
Words to fill space, maybe.

But words carefully chosen.
Not tracts on politics, how to
live better, find the correct path.
Why not, simply, more poetry?

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Our Pipe Dream

I realized early – lucky me –
that I'd never make it
as far as the big leagues.

Too small for the NBA,
couldn't hit a major league curve ball,
too erratic a passer for the NFL.

All of us who played in high school
thought we had a fighting chance,
and some of them came close.

But none ever made it to the Bigs,
traveled instead by bus, stayed in seedy
hotels, ate in greasy spoons.

Their families, without their man at home,
waited for the big break.
It came when they broke up, divorced.

The coaches squared with me:
Nice try but get a good education.
Luckily, I had damned good coaches.

Relieving Oneself

I read that a former boss
has died, age sixty,
sixteen years younger than me.

A few phone calls confirm that
he killed himself in his
backyard, a bullet through the brain.

None of us plan to go
to his funeral because
none of us liked him.

One day he was a prince,
the next day an ogre –
sure signs of bi-polar disorder.

But we were the sick ones,
not him, according to his
brilliant but faulty thinking.

Thinking back, maybe we – *I* –
should have said something.
Would he have heard it?

We'll never know.
It's a loss, another of many.
I wish him well now he's dead.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Skulls

My friend Doug loves to go to Cambodia,
its people friendly, diminutive, enterprising,
busy with their lives, in perpetual motion.
The food is inexpensive, filling and
delicious, even the street fare peddled
by merchants with carts they park everywhere.
He's even thinking of retiring there someday,
living in a treehouse – he's already
purchased the tree! – being served by a woman.
What services the woman offers depends,
Doug says, on how much he pays and,
of course, how young and attractive.
Doug is young, was probably a teenager
when Pol Pot the dictator killed so many
dissidents during the 70s, mainly the educated
or just citizens who chose to wear glasses.
I recall so vividly the images taken by
the first photographers who ventured in,
mass graves and bowers of skulls and bones,
hundreds and thousands of Cambodians
murdered for not fitting the correct image.
I understand now why veterans of wars
don't go back to the killing fields they knew
during the various battles fought over the years.
I think of Cambodia and I see skulls,
arranged artistically in a circular well,
empty eye sockets staring back at me,
open mouths warning me to stay away,
no matter what services rendered by young
ladies who climb trees to escape the past.